Winter Rally Day is Here

As we gather for Church School on Sun., Jan. 7, after our Christmas break, the Christian Education Committee invites you to a continental breakfast in the new Maker's Space (Room 234), beginning at 9:30 am. Please bring a breakfast bread to share.

Come and grab a bite to eat on your way to class, and wish your friends a Happy New Year! Class details and locations are listed on page 3.

Inviting Families of Young Children

ELPC is a community that welcomes persons of all ages. In an effort to best minister to families with young children (birth through pre-school), we are hosting an “open house” in the nursery on Sun., Jan. 21, during the Church School hour (9:45–10:45 am). Gather with other families in a kid-friendly space for light refreshments, fellowship, and an opportunity to share ideas and insights about how ELPC can best meet the needs of families with young children.

Please RSVP to Gloria Knopp by Wed., Jan. 17, so that we have enough refreshments for everyone.

United We Pray on World Healing Day

At noon Greenwich Time, December 31, 1986, men, women, and children around the world gathered to participate in the most comprehensive prayer activity in history—a planetary affirmation of peace and love, forgiveness, and understanding involving millions of people in a simultaneous global mind link. The purpose was to reverse the polarity of the negative force field, achieve a critical mass of spiritual consciousness, and usher in a new era of Peace on Earth. This event has continued every December 31.

Join us in body or spirit on Sun., Dec. 31, 6:50–8 am, for meditation and a walk on the labyrinth in the Social Hall. Add your love and light to the healing of this world. For more information, call 412.244.3333 or visit Quartus.org.
Pastoral Message

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush, Pastor

A new year has begun! I’m always a bit partial to even-numbered years (like 2018). They just feel more symmetrical and balanced than their odd-numbered compatriots. And with the beginning of any new year, there is always a sense of hope—“This year will be a better than the last” or “Time for a fresh start!” Hopefully your January has brought you something to celebrate and something to look forward to in the coming months.

A new year is also a time to reflect on the year just past; and if we are feeling brave, we can look back even farther than just 12 months. For example, a lot has happened in our world in the past decade. Thomas Friedman’s recent book, Thank You For Being Late, highlights some of the incredible technological changes that trace their roots to 2006–2007. For example, in September 2006, Facebook became open to everyone, and in November 2006, Google bought YouTube. By the end of that year, 1 billion people worldwide were officially connected to the Internet. Soon thereafter in 2007 came the emergence of Twitter, the first iPhone, the social justice voice of Change.org, the e-book revolution with Amazon’s Kindle, and the conceptualization of Airbnb. In 10 short years since then, our lives have accelerated and grown both more interconnected and complicated due to these tech innovations. Perhaps that is why a lot of people are starting 2018 feeling out of breath and praying that the New Year gives them a chance to get caught up on things at last.

Reflecting on the year(s) past often leads people to make New Year’s resolutions. But if our minds and spirits are already feeling overwhelmed by the pace of life, I’m not sure that adding things to one’s “To Do” list is advisable. So instead, I want to give you permission not to do some things that you might have been doing in 2017. You have permission not to feel obligated to be caught up in every area of your life, and permission not to believe that you are only successful if you are chronically busy. You have permission not to say “Yes” to at least five things people are asking of you, and permission not to believe a dozen negative things you’ve heard people say.

Perhaps the most important thing I want to offer is to have you consider taking a break each day. Recent scientific studies have compared brain cell activity when exposed to different types of music and moments of silence. By far the healthiest option was silence. Our brains are constantly processing and responding to stimuli, whether it is traffic noise, loud intrusive music, or soothing pleasurable music. But if we can take a break from noise—from stimuli, Smartphone beeps and images, and piped in songs—our brains go into a “default mode.” In effect, they begin sorting out and organizing information already stored in our brains. Those quiet times lead to real self-reflection and new insights, because our brain literally has a moment to think for itself.

I’ve quoted this psalm verse a lot: “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Before a new decade and the “latest new thing” forces itself upon you, take 5 minutes today and every day just to be—be quiet, be peaceful, be God’s beloved child. And if the 5 minutes stretch to 10 or 20, it is all good. God literally has all the time in the world for you and me. Shouldn’t we return the favor?
**Christian Education**
The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries

**Contemporaries**  
**Harambe Room**  
Facilitator: Mary Alice Lightle

Jan. 7 | 14 | 21: Faces  
Led by Mark Roth and Rev. Carol Divens

Jan. 7: The Faces of Jesus
What does Jesus really look like? We will look not only at what some experts think he actually might have looked like, but at how important someone’s face is in how we judge their other qualities.

Jan. 14: When Someone Looks Different
While those with facial abnormalities challenge our social standards, those who are good-looking get unearned advantages. How does this inform Jesus’ call for us to show love and support for “the least of these”?

Jan. 21: Racial Identification and Social Justice
Most of us are better at identifying people from our own ethnic and racial groups than those from unfamiliar groups. But in America, this takes on special significance in the criminal justice system, where many people, particularly African Americans, are convicted based on eyewitness testimony. How did Jesus expand the definition of who our brothers and sisters are?

Jan. 28: The Invaluable Contributions of African Americans to Presbyterianism
In 1807, Rev. Dr. John Glouster founded the First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Ever since, African Americans have been actively shaping our denomination. The Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe, pastor emeritus of Grace Memorial Church, will lead us.

**Journey with Scripture**  
**Second Floor Library**  
Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

The Apostle Paul writes, “For the present form of this world is passing away” (1 Corinthians 7: 31). Rather than creating fear, these words intend to encourage—to let go and yet hold on as life moves forward. History arcs, the rule of God emerges. January Epiphany readings call for a consciousness of detachment, yet also—paradoxically—to develop a deep attachment for place and neighbor. Come and join us for these readings:

Jan. 7: Genesis 1:1–5; Psalm 29; Acts 19: 1–7 Mark 1:4–11
Jan. 21: Jonah 3:1–5,10; Psalm 62:5–12; 1 Corinthians 7:29–31; Mark 1:14–20
Jan. 28: Deuteronomy 18:15–20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; Mark 1:21–28

**Seekers**  
**Chapel**  
Facilitator: Gwen Puza

Jan. 7: What is the Meaning of Life?
Wil Forrest will lead our discussion as we reflect upon one of fundamental existential questions humankind has faced: What is the meaning of life?

Jan. 14: Walking the Line Between Faith and Politics
Many issues we face in America today have a spiritual component to them. Faithfully deciding what to say and do about serving the common good, immigration policies, access to health care, military spending and other topics falls under the category of Christian Ethics. Pastor Randy will lead our discussion.

Jan. 21: The Politics of Jesus in the Gospels
Jesus’ world was no less politically fraught than ours, and his message of “the kingdom of God” has clear political overtones. How did he navigate some of the controversial questions of his day, and what, if anything, may we learn from these examples for our present context? Dr. Tucker Ferda, visiting assistant professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, will lead us.

Jan. 28: Were We Founded As A Christian Nation?
Many folks in our country believe that we were founded as a Christian nation, but is that true? Historian and elder Peter Gilmore will separate fact from fiction in the conflicted story of America’s origins.

**Soul Food**  
**Third Floor Music Room**  
Facilitator: Rev. Joe Hajdu

January: The Book of Joy by Douglas Abrams
We will begin discussing The Book of Joy, with the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, led by the Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members.

**Young Adults**  
**Room 224**  
Facilitator: Wil Forrest

Jan. 14: Prayer Time
Come connect with other young adults for a biblical reflection and some group prayer.
Presbyterian Women
Sherry Anderson, Moderator

The Book of Hebrews: A Cloud of Witnesses Bible Study
Tues., Jan. 2 10 am | Mon., Jan. 7 7 pm
Our next lesson is titled In Community with the Tradition of the Past. Our Tuesday session will be followed by a potluck lunch with soup and contributions from the group. Please bring your own place setting. See the bulletin for meeting rooms.

Spiritual Life
The Rev. Mary Lynn Callahan, Director of Spiritual Life Ministries

Sun., Jan. 14: Interfaith Panel on the Use of Sound in Faith 12–3 pm
Our Christian life—like that of virtually every other faith—is saturated with sound. Bells call us to worship, we sing our praises to God, and are moved by beautiful anthems to the accompaniment of organ, piano, and other instruments. We clap our appreciation, utter aloud prayers and liturgy, and, of course, we listen to sermons, teachers, and the words of others.

All of these sounds have an effect upon who we are, as well as what and how we believe. Scientists study the actual physical effects of differing sound waves on matter, and mystics have long acknowledged the impact of sound, including the sound of silence on the open heart.

Join the Spiritual Life Committee in the Social Hall as we explore the science and spiritual dimensions of sound in our own tradition and that of other faiths.

Fri.–Sun., Jan. 26–28: Silent Retreat
Setting time apart for silence and reflection is a time honored tradition for gaining insight into one’s own life and deepening one’s own relationship with God. Share the silence with others on the journey at Kearns Spirituality Center near North Park from dinner on Friday evening until brunch on Sunday.

Registration is required and includes an opportunity to meet with a spiritual director. The cost is $135; scholarship assistance is available. Call the Rev. Mary Lynn Callahan at 412.441.3800 with questions.

Thurs., Jan. 25: Faith, Science, and Our Spiritual Life 6:30–8 pm
What do the Universe and God have in common? If evolution is true, does that leave room for God? If I believe in God does that mean I have to deny physics? Got questions? So do we!

Join us as we discuss the intersection between the science of our universe and our understanding of the Divine.

Read about becoming a member of the weSERVE list and service opportunities at ELPC.church/programs/iSERVE. To ask questions, contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x114.

New Year,
New Opportunities
by Wil Forrest, Coordinator of Young Adult and Outreach Programs

At this time of year, many folks examine their lives and reset priorities. As you do these things, you may be thinking about a service commitment you have made at ELPC or elsewhere. Does it still fit into your life? Does it edify you? Does it use your God-given gifts? Do you still enjoy it?

The author of Ecclesiastes writes that there is a time for every purpose under heaven. There is a time to serve—and, I offer to you, there is a time to move on. Review your commitments to see if there is still a fit. Could you or the task be better served by stepping aside so that someone else can take it on?

Talk with your committee chair or staff member about your current commitment, and discuss if you still feel a fit or if something else is calling you. Think about what might be next. It may be time to take on new challenges and ways to serve God.

Read about becoming a member of the weSERVE list and service opportunities at ELPC.church/programs/iSERVE. To ask questions, contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x114.

College Reunion
College-age young adults are invited to come catch up over dinner and games at Jen and Eddie Willson’s home on Thurs., Jan. 4, 5:30 pm.

To RSVP, contact Sara Hackett.
Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Coordinator of Christian Education and Youth Ministry

Sat.–Sun., Jan. 27–28: Confirmation Class Overnight Retreat
Our Confirmation Class overnight retreat at ELPC will be from 3 pm on Saturday, until after Journey worship on Sunday. During our time together, we will focus on discipleship through participation in the sacraments and mission.

Sun., Jan. 28: DG2! @ ELPC 12:30–3 pm
Students in grades 4–12 are invited to join Doing Good Together! (DG2!)—a partnership between ELPC and Rodef Shalom—to serve in a variety of ways, make new friends, and have fun together—all while exploring this year’s theme of “Building Together”. Lunch will be served.

Young Adult Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of Young Adult and Outreach Programs

Fri., Jan. 5: First Friday @ Pittsburgh Potluck 7 pm
Yinz are invited to join us in the Second Floor Parlor to enjoy a very Pittsburgh potluck and evening together. Sign up with Wil to bring popular Burg fare, such as pierogis, salad with fries, brats, pretzel jello salad, burnt almond torte, or just contribute to the cookie table. The evening will be filled with food, friends, and games—all with Pittsburgh flair.

Mission Matters

The Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Associate Pastor for Mission Ministries

Environmental Tips from the Justice Committee to Reduce Your Energy Use

• Turn your thermostat down one or two degrees (or more!).
  The Environmental Protection Agency recommends setting your thermostat at or below 70 degrees when you are home and awake, and turning it down to 62 degrees when you are out or asleep. This will reduce your energy use—thus helping the environment—and lower your bills. According to Energy.gov, you can save about 1% on your heating bill for each degree your thermostat is turned down during cold weather.

• Insulate your water heater and lower the water heater temperature.
  Insulating your water heater can reduce standby heat losses by 25–45% and save you about 7–16% in water heating costs, while lowering energy use and protecting the environment.

• Perform regular furnace maintenance.
  The largest budgeted expenses for many households are home heating and cooling costs. With proper heater maintenance, you can ensure that your equipment is running at top efficiency, saving you money, conserving energy, and helping the environment.

ELPC People

If you have news to share, please call Gloria Knopp at 412.441.3800 x122.

Good News

• Emily Rosenthal and John Buckley are proud to announce the birth of their granddaughter, Karon Grace, who was born on Nov. 18.
• Joel and Beth Minnigh are proud to announce the birth of their grandson, Gideon Espy Minnigh, who was born on Dec. 5.

Prayers

We offer our prayers and condolences to the family and friends of ELPC member Reggie Plato, who passed away on Nov. 18.

Renovation Updates

Last month, significant progress was made to complete the majority of work on the Ground Floor, Second Floor, and First Floor north hallway. New glass doors also have been installed at the Highland and Whitfield entrances.

This month, the First Floor east hallway will be closed, as the final construction phase begins. What had been our Library and several offices, will be transformed into two, glass-fronted, modernized gathering spaces.

Continue to keep our workers, staff, and visitors in prayer as the final chapter of our renovation work unfolds.

Library Resources are Available for Free

We are thinning out the books and periodicals in our old Library. Items that will no longer be kept in our permanent collection will be available to congregation and community members for free until Tues., Jan. 2.

Remaining items will be available outside of our Church School classrooms on Rally Day, Sun., Jan. 7, before being donated.
Explore the Sanctuary & Chapel

Join us following worship on Sun., Jan. 14, 12 pm, for an architectural tour of our beautiful, Gothic Sanctuary and Romanesque Chapel. Our guide will discuss these architectural styles, as well as the history and symbolism of these unique spaces. Meet at the rear of the Sanctuary.

Photos courtesy of Chris Litherland

Our LGBTQ Ministry is for All

All people are welcome to join us at our monthly Spiritual Gathering on Sun., Jan. 14, 12:30 pm.

Interested in getting involved in our vibrant, diverse LGBTQ Ministry? Contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x114.

God created you.
God loves you.
Be yourself.